

III.

On an Alteration in the Handle of the Forceps, &c. By H. DAVIES, Member of the Royal College of Surgeons, Lecturer on Midwifery and on the Diseases of Women and Children, Surgeon in Ordinary, and Surgeon-Accoucheur to the Western Dispensary for Complaints of Women and Children, and General Lying-in Charity, &c. &c.

I AM induced to give publicity to an alteration in the handle of the midwifery forceps, which I think, from its utility, deserves to be more generally known than it appears to be.

To simplify an instrument without diminishing its utility, may be considered as an improvement; and where, under certain circumstances, the efficiency of the instrument is by this means increased, it will, I presume, be considered a greater improvement.

The alteration to which I allude is the addition of a pin to one handle of the forceps, and a corresponding depression or groove in the other, by which the necessity for tying the handles with a napkin or tape will be done away with, and which, to say the least of it, is extremely troublesome.

I am well aware that some gentlemen do not confine the handles at all; but the generality, I believe, do: and something of this sort is thought necessary from the usual directions that are given respecting it.

This improvement was made by Mr. Clarke, and has been mentioned by him in his lectures for some years past.

The pin should be made of brass, or some firm metal, and be *at least* three quarters of an inch long, and placed on the inner side, and near the extremity of one of the handles. The groove on the inside of the opposite handle should be neatly adapted for the reception of the pin in its lateral direction, but should be larger in the longitudinal one; as when the forceps are applied, and the handles brought together, the surfaces not being completely parallel, the pin would not otherwise pass in the depression.

By the fitting well on the sides, no lateral motion will be allowed, and every advantage of firmness and steadiness will be obtained which the tape affords.

The advantages of the pin and groove over the tape or napkin are:—

1. That no additional apparatus is required to the forceps when applied, and the handles are grasped with more ease.

2. That, while resting at intervals from extracting where there are no pains, or in the intervals of the pains where they still occur, a full expansion of the child's head may thus be allowed; and the ill effects which might result from continued compression on it will be avoided.

3. Provided the compression on the blades should require more than their usual approximation, and consequently the approximation of the extremities of the handles, this will be allowed by the pin and groove, which will still retain their firmness; but which will be lost where the tape or napkin is used, unless it is re-adapted.

My recommendation of this improvement can add little weight to the authority of the original improver.

I have never myself used a tape or napkin since the addition of the pin, &c. was made; and I think the advantages of it will be experienced by all who may choose to adopt it.

I am led to make another remark on the forceps, which was very forcibly suggested to me by a recent case, and which I shall relate in part for the more ready illustration of my point.

A lady of robust habit fell in labour on Sunday, the 19th of November. On the Wednesday following it was deemed advisable to deliver her. As I was some distance from home, I requested the loan of a pair of forceps which had narrow polished blades, without any lateral curvature. The blades were passed with ease; but as it required a good deal of exertion to extract the head, which was particularly large, I became greatly alarmed for the safety of the perinæum, which, from the abrupt curvature of the blades, was stretched to a very considerable extent before the head approached it.

I am in a great measure indebted for the preservation of it to the kind assistance afforded me by Mr. Woolly, of Brompton, whose forceps I used, and who saw the disadvantages of the abruptness of the curvature, and also how much more simple and generally useful the pin and groove would have been to the tape which I made use of, from necessity, on this occasion.

What I would wish to inculcate is, that the curvature of the foreeps, from the handles to the bow, should be very gradual, in order not to produce this sudden stretching of the perinæum.

As this case terminated in every way well to the mother and her child, without any particular occurrence, I shall not trespass upon the pages of the *REPOSITORY* by detailing more of it.

Dr. Granville while Editor of the "Medical Intelligencer" published these Observations on the Forceps of his friend, Mr Davies, who for many months while the Doctor was studying Midwifery at Paris, gratuitously attended his Patients at the Westminster General Dispensary.!!!

So many other respectable Practitioners were attacked in the same Publicist in the same rude & insolent manner that the Purchasers grew dissatisfied and during Dr. Granville's Editorship the sale sunk from 600 monthly to 400, and in consequence he was dismissed by the Proprietors from any further concern in the Publicist.

Dr. Granville was afterwards for similar conduct turned off from the Editorship of the Medical & Physical Journal.